

Great News!

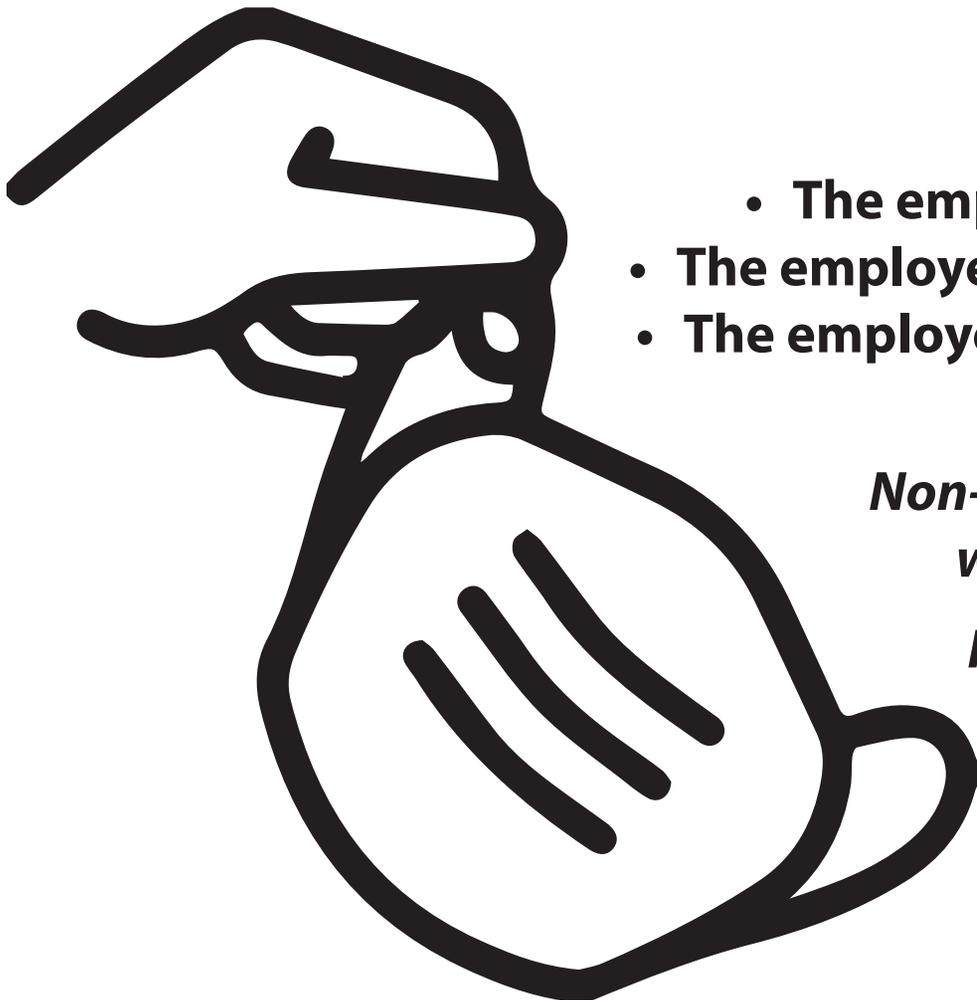
Boise VA staff can unmask if:

- **The employee has been vaccinated for COVID.**
- **The employee does not share the air with patients.**
- **The employee cannot be visually seen by patients.**

****Disclaimer:***

Non-vaccinated staff will still be required to wear masks at all times & test for COVID.

If COVID transmission rates increase the Boise VA will go back to wearing masks at all times.



OFFICE OF COMMUNITY CARE REFERENCE GUIDE

** Please do not send veterans to Bldg. 33 to speak with Community Care staff in-person. Community Care staff telework from home offices. Instead, please reference this guide and inform a veteran who they should call.*

The Office of Community Care can assist with:

- General questions about Community Care.
- Verifying authorizations & validity dates of authorizations to outside providers.
- Checking on the status of a consult that originated from a provider at the VA.
- Sending referrals & assisting with referral issues.
- Verifying appointments with outside providers & assisting with scheduling with outside provider.

TriWest Customer Service Line: 1-877-226-8749

P - Veteran has a referral for community care but has not heard from anyone about scheduling.
S - Have the veteran call local CC staff by dialing (208) 422-1000 & following the prompts to reach CC.

P - Veteran was seen by private sector emergency room.
S - VA must be notified within 72 hours to be financially covered. Veteran or provider can notify VA by calling 1-844-724-7842.

PROBLEMSOLUTION

P - Veteran receives a bill from the private sector for care that should have been or was authorized by the VA, and financially covered by TriWest.

S - Have the veteran call the VA's call center for billing at 1-877-881-7618. Local CC staff are no longer able to assist veterans.

P - Veteran wants to know if they are eligible for Community Care.

S - Ask veteran to call their Primary Care Provider/Team. The Team can verify eligibility & start the consult process for community care.

P - Veteran received a bill for ambulance or Life Flight they believe VA should pay.

S - Ask veteran to follow up with Travel Office. Travel office processes all travel claims regardless of whether care was delivered in/outside of VA.

P - Veteran paid for a pharmaceutical & they want the VA to reimburse.

S - Veteran must mail original receipt and prescription to B410 10 N 20 NPC, 1601 E. 4th Plain Blvd., Vancouver, WA 98661

P - Veteran needs/wants to go to local urgent care clinic in private sector.

S - Veteran must first call TriWest's Urgent Care Eligibility to determine they are eligible & the clinic is in TriWest's network. Call 1-833-483-8669.



VA

Boise VA
Medical Center

Information from our ISSO's!

This week, we received a notification that there were two instances of a package containing a complaint letter and a flash drive sent to health departments. These packages appeared to be from a government health agency; however, the senders listed on the package confirmed they were not sent from them.

This is a social engineering attack called a USB Drop Attack. In this case, the sender (a malicious actor) is attempting to project a sense of authority by sending as a well known government health agency as well as a call to action (to read what is on the USB drive). It is very likely that this drive contains malware up to and including ransomware. In some cases, these devices can be activated by the simple act of plugging them in.

It is very important that if you receive an unknown or unexpected USB drive **DO NOT** plug it in (never plug in any USB device that you have not obtained permission to use through the ePAS request system). Instead, please immediately contact the Information Security Officers at VHABOI-ISSO

On April 11th, 2022, the Parking Lot 10 "Conex" COVID testing site will be converted to Symptomatic Veterans Testing only. Veterans will schedule a COVID test if they are symptomatic by calling x1499 for available appointments Monday-Friday from 0800-1000. More appointment hours can be added if we have another surge.

As of April 11th, 2022 - Employee Health (Laura Carrico) in Bldg. 88 will be moved to a new location - T122 Comp & Pen building Rm. 112 and resume normal employee health operations. In addition to this move, an employee health nurse assigned to COVID operations will also be at this location (T122) in Rm. 113. Services provided by the COVID nurse include COVID testing, management of weekly surveillance testing, COVID vaccinations and Fit Testing for new employees and urgent needs.

COVID Testing for symptomatic employees will be done at the new location T122. Symptomatic employees must schedule an appointment for testing and can book a COVID test via Microsoft Bookings link (below). Testing appointments will be available Monday-Friday from 0700-0900.

Please forward the following link to Microsoft Booking to your personal email account: Boise VAMC (office365.com) You will use this link to book an appointment. This ensures that employees can book an appointment without the need to come to campus (because they are symptomatic).

[Microsoft Booking link, Boise VAMC \(office365.com\)](#)

The Microsoft Booking link will be available on the BVAMC SharePoint as well.

If you have questions or concerns, please reach out to Will Baisden or Paige Calhoun.

!!!! COVID TESTING CHANGES



YOU'VE GOT Hatch Act Guidance for VA Employees



Michael R. Hogan
Chief Counsel, General Law

Each one of us at VA has the great privilege of serving Americans who wore this Nation's uniform and fought to defend our way of life. But along with that privilege comes the responsibility of making sure we focus only on enriching the lives of Veterans, and not ourselves.

Given the unprecedented number of employees teleworking as a result of COVID-19, the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) issued an advisory to remind employees that the Hatch Act applies whether an employee is working at a VA facility or working outside of the office. Remember, the Hatch Act prohibits employees from, among other things, engaging in political activity while on duty. Political activity is activity directed toward the success or failure of a political party, partisan political group or candidate for partisan political office. The OSC guidance highlighted three specific areas:

- When employees are considered "on duty." Employees are "on duty" for Hatch Act purposes during the hours they are working. Employees maintaining a regular work schedule while teleworking have the same on-duty status as if they were reporting to their regular duty stations. Employees are not considered on duty during their lunch break. Employees working irregular hours are considered on duty any time they are performing official duties.
- Videoconferencing and other virtual communications. Employees participating in virtual work-related conferences, such as meetings through Skype or Zoom, are subject to the same on-duty Hatch Act restrictions as if they were reporting to their regular duty station. Employees should not wear partisan political clothing, such as campaign hats or shirts, while participating in a work-related video conference call. Employees should also ensure that any partisan materials, like campaign signs or candidate pictures, are not visible to others during the call.
- Social media. The Hatch Act also applies to social media communications. Employees who use social media are encouraged to review OSC's social media guidance, found [here](#), to understand what activities are prohibited and permitted.

If you have questions about the Hatch Act in general, or other government ethics issues, you can contact the Boise VAMC Integrity and Compliance Officer at 208-422-1267 or contact the OGC [Ethics Specialty Team](#). You may also contact OSC by email at hatchact@osc.gov.

COMPLIANCE CORNER



Employee Use of Marijuana and Marijuana Products

In accordance with Executive Order 12564 and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Directive and Handbook 5383, "VA Drug-Free Workplace Program," VA is committed to maintaining a workforce that is free from illegal drug use, including marijuana. It is a condition of employment for all employees to refrain from using illegal drugs on and off duty.

Marijuana is illegal under Federal law. Even though some states have legalized the use of marijuana for medicinal and recreational purposes, marijuana, marijuana extracts, and tetrahydrocannabinols (THC) are illegal for human use under Federal law. VA employees are not permitted to use marijuana on or off duty under the provisions of VA's Drug-Free Workplace Program.

In many states, marijuana, marijuana oils, marijuana infused products, and hemp products are widely available for purchase. Although certain products such as cannabidiol (CBD) may be advertised as not containing THC, employees should be aware that the use of CBD and marijuana-derived products may result in a positive drug test because the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not certify the levels of THC in these products.

VA employees will continue to be tested for marijuana metabolites under the Department of Health and Human Services Federal Drug-Free Workplace Program mandatory guidelines. Under these guidelines, there is no legitimate medical explanation for a marijuana positive test result, other than a verified prescription of certain FDA-approved drugs. A prescription for medical marijuana is not an acceptable medical explanation for a positive drug test.

VA employees with a verified positive drug test may be subject to administrative action up to and including removal from Federal service.

For additional information, please contact your servicing Human Resources Office.



BOISE is HIGHLY RELIABLE

HRO PRINCIPLES & VALUES

THEME OF THE MONTH
Reluctance to Simplify

March 2022 | National Safety Poster



A Small Detail Prevents Potential Risk

C

CONTEXT

While reviewing a change of medication request for a Veteran who had recently suffered a heart attack, staff members at the Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital noticed a possible history of stroke noted in the Veteran's medical record.

A

ACTION

The stroke was not highlighted on the Veteran's problem list, but the cardiologist decided to dig deeper into the Veteran's health history and to thoroughly research the requested medication anyway. The cardiologist reviewed cardiovascular guidelines, documented studies related to the requested medication in people with a history of stroke, and even called the Veteran directly to gather more details.

R

RESULTS

In the end, the cardiologist decided to prescribe a different medication, one with no contraindicators for people with a history of stroke. By embracing Reluctance to Simplify and refusing to settle for the simplest solution, staff members at the Hines VA prevented potential medication risk to the Veteran.

The cardiologist not only reviewed the guidelines and the research that was done but also called the patient.

*Michael Egan, APRN, DNP, FNP
Nurse Practitioner
Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital
Hines, Illinois*

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

For more information, visit: http://bit.ly/HighReliability_sp

VHA'S JOURNEY TO
HIGH
RELIABILITY
Your Care is Our Mission.

Give blood.

Every 2 seconds someone
in the U.S. needs blood.

American Red Cross



Blood Drive
Boise Veterans Administration
Medical Center
VA Gym in Building 119

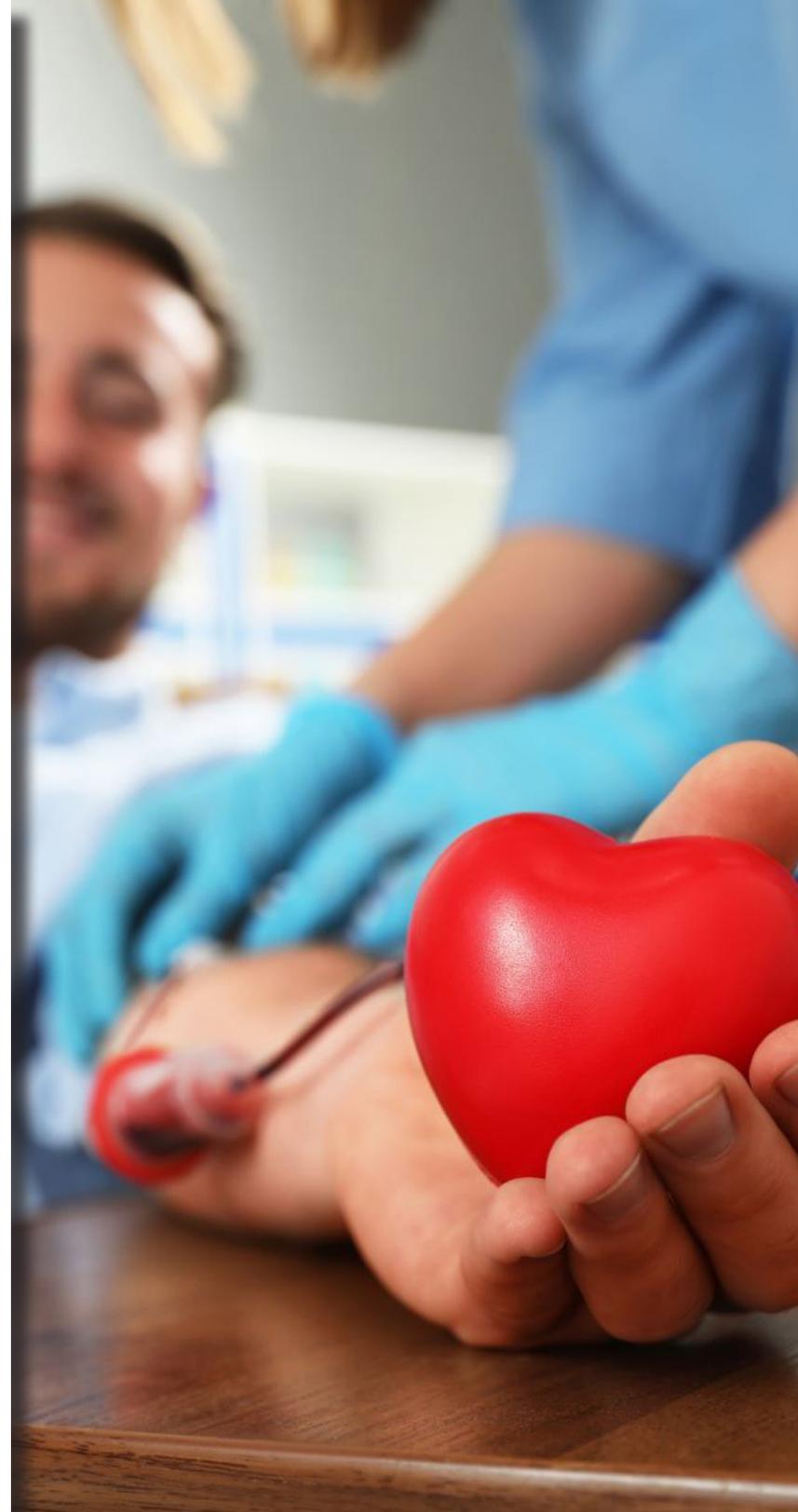
gym
911 Mountain Cove Rd.
Boise, ID 83702

Tuesday, May 24, 2022
8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Schedule online at www.redcrossblood.org
Sponsor code: BVA
Or contact Cheryl Ross (208) 422-1000 ext 7778



Stick to it! Come to give May 20-31 for an exclusive 20-oz. Red Cross aluminum water bottle and sticker set, while supplies last. You can customize your bottle to show your donor pride and stay hydrated for your next donation.



[431]-Order ID: 1341553 - Item ID: 571895 - Qty: 1 of 1 - 00314648 - 2022APL0134 - AP00 - 202545

Coding Connection

How to Code: Common Lesion Destructions & Biopsies

PRE AND NON-MALIGNANT LESIONS

1. Pre-Malignant

(example: Actinic Keratosis)

- 17000—First Pre-Malignant lesion destruction
 - > 17003—Each additional lesion
- 17004—15+ Pre-Malignant lesions

Example: You use liquid nitrogen on 5 AKs. The coding would be 17000 (for the first lesion) and 17003 x4 units (for the additional four lesions destroyed)

2. Non-Malignant

(example: Warts and Seborrheic Keratosis)

- 17110— 1-14 Non-Malignant lesions
- 17111—15+ Non-Malignant lesions

Example: You use liquid nitrogen on 12 SKs and 3 AKs. The coding would be 17110 (for the 12 SKs destroyed),

17000 (for the first AK destroyed),

17003 x2 units (for each additional AK).

Documenting location and number of lesions will help support your code selection.

Skin Tags

Coding for Skin Tag removal includes all method of removals, chemical destructions, excision, shave, etc.

- 11200— 1-15 Skin Tags
 - > 11201— Each additional 10 Skin Tags

Example 1: You shave 17 skin tags. The coding would be 11200 only.

Example 2: You shave and apply liquid nitrogen to 26 skin tags. The coding would be 11200 (for the first 15 skin tags) and 11201 (for the additional 10 treated). Can only charge 11201 for increments of 10 additional skin tags treated.

Lesion Biopsy

- 11102—Shave Biopsy, single lesion
 - > 11103—each additional shave biopsy
- 11104—Punch Biopsy, single lesion
 - > 11105—each additional punch biopsy
- 11106—Incisional biopsy, single lesion, includes simple closure
 - > 11107—each additional incisional biopsy

Example: You perform 4 shave biopsies. The coding would be 11102 (for the first lesion), 11103 x3 units (for the additional 3 lesions removed).

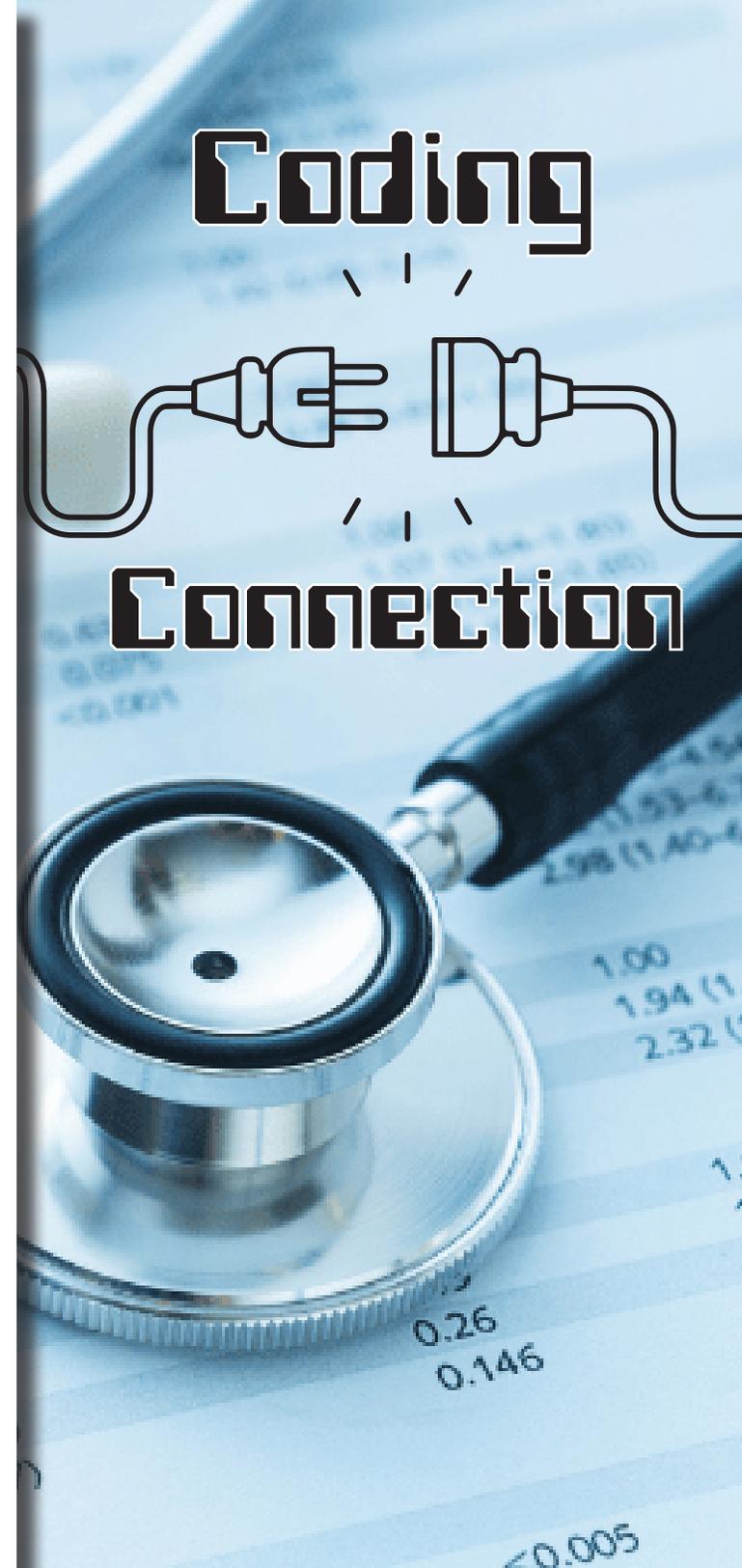
Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about these coding topics and how to support them with your documentation.

Brooke Horlocher, CPC

MRT-Coding Auditor

brooke.horlocher@va.gov

208-422-1000 X4435



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Tom Wenzel

After growing up in New Jersey and always dreaming of becoming a cowboy, I traveled to the north end of the San Luis Valley in SW Colorado when I was eighteen and worked on a cattle ranch at 8000ft elevation for five years. I learned how to do it all, including shoeing horses and packing mules while I herded sheep one of those summers up in the high country of the Rocky Mountains. They grew their own alfalfa so I learned a lot of farming also. It was on that ranch that

I saw a California Condor and countless other wildlife. For a city boy, you bet I thought I was in heaven. I got married very young so by the time we had our second child I realized I couldn't support a family on ranch hand wages. I needed to get a college degree but needed help. It was interesting, to say the least, for this long-haired hippie looking guy to meet with the Air Force Recruiter. I actually cut my hair, which was half way down my back, and shaved my beard before

going to Basic Training!

I served in the United States Air Force from 1979 to 1985. Being a Crew Chief on the F4 Phantom, 3rd Tactical Air Wing at Clark Air Base Philippines, was actually a fun and exciting job. One day while on the End Of Runway Crew inspecting the fighter jets just prior to takeoff, a C-5 cargo plane came rolling by with its 24 wheels and tires. We noticed one of the tires was flat. Cargo planes didn't stop for our inspection so it rolled right onto the runway. I

radioed maintenance to let the control tower know ASAP but the plane was already rambling down the runway. The tire blew and sparks went flying causing more tires to blow and shooting metal everywhere. The pilot fortunately aborted the takeoff. It was a situation that could have gone very, very badly, especially with a full load of fuel on board!

The next day the pilot came out to talk with us about what we saw first hand. I asked him what it felt like in the cockpit with all those tires blowing up and metal flying everywhere. He told us they sit so high up off the ground that they didn't feel a thing. I asked what made him abort the takeoff. He said he just "felt that something wasn't right"! After that, at our urging, they gave the End of Runway Crew direct access to the control tower.

One other experience, while stationed in the Philippines, happened while our fighter wing



The jet did a belly flop into the water, fortunately missing the small fishing boats. And since no fishermen were injured they were able to “fish out” both pilots who had successfully ejected.

In the summer of 1985 I was discharged from the Air Force while at Mountain Home Air Force Base. I got divorced that same month. Two years later I married an angel named Cydney and have been blessed with (so far) a thirty-five year marriage and four more children. So I have a total of six children and ten grandchildren. I finished my Nursing Degree at Boise State University in 1991 (thanks to Cydney’s willingness to help put me through school). Just prior to the beginning of my senior year our oldest daughter, Jennifer, was diagnosed with a brain tumor. She passed away two and a half years later. I mention this because in 1989 I started my career at the BVAMC while I was a student. The outpouring of love and support I received when she was diagnosed, from not only my classmates, but fellow staff at this hospital, was overwhelming. I learned to love working with the

Veterans also. When I graduated from BSU I didn’t hesitate to accept a position here as an RN.

I can honestly say I have enjoyed coming to work every single day for thirty years! I started out on old Ward 6, now 2MS, worked in the Float Pool and ICU, then as RNOD (Nursing supervisor for the hospital) on the evening and night shifts for seven years. As RNOD I loved working nights covering the Emergency Room. So when the time was right I took a position there for the next fourteen years. It was in the ER that I realized I was working in the midst of walking history. I met soldiers who fought on D-Day and in other great battles both big and small and who were held captive in Germany, Japan and Vietnam. One of those captives actually walked the Bataan Death March. When I first started working here there were still WWI Veterans coming in! My reward for caring for our Veterans was and continues to be their respect and appreciation. I never hesitate to ask about their experiences and thank them for their service. And they never hesitate to thank the

staff for caring for them.

So in December 2020, after working my last six years in the Endoscopy Clinic, I “hung up my spurs” and retired. I have been an Ultra Bicyclist for many years. It wasn’t until I was about fifty years old that I started running marathons and racing in the Boise Ironman Triathlon. So right after I retired I started planning a trip...a very long bike trip... with my wife’s support of course. I spent the summer of 2021 fulfilling a lifelong dream of riding my bicycle across the U.S. I started out in late June in Hacet Beach in Florence, Oregon and finished in mid-August in Virginia Beach, Virginia. I made the 3,479 mile trek successfully thanks to Cydney, who drove while I rode and supported me 100% along the way. But you know, that’s another story...and a long one at that.

So after a thirty-two year career here it should be no surprise that I’m back volunteering a couple of days a week. Let the fun continue.....

was on a TDY in Korea. Amongst the jets taken was Triple Nickel, tail number 555 F4 Phantom. This plane had been shot up several times during the Vietnam War. The pilots hated to fly it because something would often go wrong just prior to takeoff...mostly leaks! At the end of the runway was the bay. On its first flight, with both afterburners roaring, as soon as it got over the bay both engines suddenly quit. I can still hear the loud “Poof Poof” as they flamed out almost simultaneously.



Boise VA Employee Healthy Teaching Kitchen

Wednesday April 6th
12:00 - 12:30 p.m. MT

Want to learn more about healthy cooking choices to stay well in times of stress?

We got you covered. Join us for this fun class for Boise VA employees to watch and/or cook-along with us.

This class will be led by Mike Parker, RN, and Madison Keller, RD.

Check out our [Employee Wellness SharePoint](#) for wellness tips, HTK recipes, recordings of prior HTK classes and information on upcoming classes.

You don't need to sign up – just join us on Teams!
Click here to [join the April 6th Teams call](#)
and [here for the HTK recipes: Mediterranean Quinoa Salad](#).



SAVE THE DATE: VA2K on May 18, 2022 from 11:00 – 2:00 p.m.

VA2K is an event to help our homeless Veterans with donations and to get outside and walk together. Toilet paper roll donations are encouraged, which directly help our Homeless Veterans. Yes, you can wear crazy colors or silly costumes during the VA2K, so team up with your unit and join us!

Will your team beat the reigning champs?

The Education Department has won **the last 6 VA2Ks** with the most donations – WOW!

Here is a picture of their trophy stash.



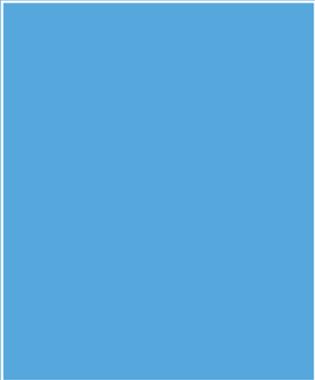
EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH FEBRUARY



Debra Mueller

In the acute care surge unit we had a patient who had been living at a nursing home that could no longer care for him because of his complex needs related to his TBI. He came to the hospital needing new placement. The local facility that worked with TBI patients closed down this year and there were no local options that could meet his needs. Debra worked quickly to network with VAs across the country and identify specialized TBI rehab facilities. There are very few of these programs nationwide. Through her tireless work, she was able to identify one in Arizona with an available bed and knowledge of working with VA patients. With 20 years of experience in the VA, Debra knew how to navigate payment sources for this type of treatment. She worked with the acute care surge unit to transition the patient to the Arizona facility. Through her commitment to our mission of serving veterans and advocacy for his needs, Debra was able to achieve a positive outcome in a situation with very few resources available. Her passion for her work and knowledge of VA and community resources as well as complex medical conditions including TBIs helped this veteran access needed care.

Shannon brings energy and initiative to his job every day and shows commitment by striving for customer satisfaction day in and day out. He consistently goes above and beyond by making sure our customers have what is needed and are satisfied and happy at the end of the day. As lead he has been in an acting warehouse supervisor role as needed on multiple accessions in the absence of the supervisor. Shannon has received and coordinated the delivery and storage over 415K of equipment and supplies needed for the new Telehealth building project. He has been diligent in receiving and tracking over \$2.5M of Covid supplies for the molecular lab and research. Shannon has working over 120hrs in housekeeping on the weekends to help back fill critical positions. Shannon's can-do attitude and exceptional work ethic sets the standard for other to follow in the warehouse.



Shannon Hough

[Please nominate an employee of the month by clicking this link.](#)